

NI Bulletin

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From the Editor

We begin this issue with an article about recently discovered countermarked coinage used by Rothsay Mills in Scotland.

This is followed by a discussion of countermarks used by Curacao.

I then provide a review of a book devoted to images of meteorites and comets found on ancient coins.

We conclude with a token used in Middlesex, England in 1795.

All submissions are welcome and can be sent to:
norenxaq@san.rr.com.

Joseph Uphoff
Editor

New Discovery in Scotland

Eric C. Hodge NI#2784

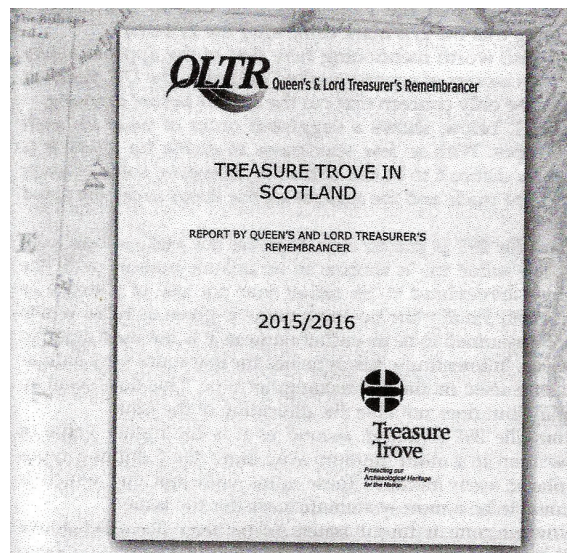


Fig. 1 The front page of the 2015/16 Scottish Treasure Trove report.

In Scotland, Treasure Trove is dealt with under the common law of Scotland. This ensures that significant objects from Scotland's past are preserved in museums for public benefit. To qualify as Treasure trove under Scottish law all portable antiquities of archaeological, historical or cultural significance are subject to claim by the Crown and must be reported. Ex gratia payment awards are made at the discretion of the Queen's and Lord treasurer'

Remembrancer (QLTR) to the finder. The payment takes into account the circumstances of discovery, the treatment of the objects by the finder, the nature of the item and any delays in reporting. So in Scotland the finder is not guaranteed the item or its market value as in England.

No doubt the end results of the two schemes are fairly similar, but it is for this reason that a *Treasure Trove in Scotland Report by Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer* is issued each year in Scotland. This report also incorporates "the Scottish Archaeological Finds Allocation Panel" so that as the name indicates all archaeological finds in Scotland are covered and that includes coins. It is an interesting read and one learns a lot in only a few pages. Whilst reviewing the report for 2015/2016 (figure 1) I came across reference TT.107/15 described as a

“Cut half silver Spanish Real of Carlos III stamped w/circular stamp 'Payable at Rothsay Mills, Isle of Bute, Argyll & Bute.’” (figures 2a & B)



Fig. 2a-b. "Payable at Rothsay Mills" countermark for 2/4 on cut half 8 reales.

Further information given was: "Rothsay Mills was one of the first cotton-spinning mills in Scotland, founded in 1779, and this unusual object reflects what was then a standard practice for paying workers. Foreign silver coinage circulated widely in Britain in the late 18th century and was often countermarked to convert it to current sterling value, in this

case for 2 shilings and four pence. Although such coinage is often linked to the exploitative practices of the "company store" it reflects also the paternalism of many industrialists by providing a stable income and such currency was also used widely in the local communities that surround such ventures. Allocated to Bute Museum".

It is worth pointing out at this juncture some misleading facts in the above report. Foreign silver coinage did not circulate widely in Britain in the late 18th century because as soon as it did it was withdrawn from

circulation and exported for a higher value. The countermark was to convert it to current sterling value, but more than that the countermarked value was slightly higher than the intrinsic silver value. This was to prevent melting and to ensure the coin was eventually returned to the mill (in exchange for gold which was readily available) when it was worth more than its silver value. This premium on countermarking was a tricky subject because if the value was increased too much this then attracted counterfeiters ready to make a quick profit.

On the basis of the above information I found details of Bute Museum from their website and emailed the curator who kindly gave me further details of the find. It was discovered by a local metal detectorist who works on the island and tends to search on the same few sites. He has found a lot of coins in the same area which was the site of a corn mill. This seems wholly logical that an employee of the cotton mill-owned shop or a cotton worker would have travelled to the corn mill for flour and the coin would have been lost in the vicinity.



Fig. 3.



Fig. 5.



Fig. 4.



Fig. 6.



Fig. 7.



Fig. 8.

*Figs 3-8 Rothsay Cotton Mills (Works)
countermarks on 8 reales*

All the above are very interesting facts but the most important aspect to me is the absolute rarity of the find. Rothsay Mills (RM)/Rothsay Cotton Mills (RCM)/Rothsay Cotton Works (RCW) issued countermarked coins at values of 5 shillings round (figure 3), 5 shillings rectangle (figure 4), 4/6 round (figure 5), 2/6 round (figure 6), 2/6 rectangle (figure 7), 2/4 rectangle (figure 2) and 1/8 round (figure 8).

There are 13 known examples of the 2/6 rectangle (figure 7) but in every case they have an additional 6-pointed star punched to one side and the 2/6 value appears to, be marked over a previous value, apparently 2/4. This coin does not have the additional 6-pointed star which leads to the supposition that the star was added when the

2/4 value was over-punched or it was added to make clear that the value was increased to 2/6 thereby indicating that the 2/6 mark came after the 2/4 mark.

It is also worth mentioning here that of the approximately 70 known issuers of countermarked dollars in theb UK, Rothsay Mills is the only concern that cut thr dollars before marking.

Table 1, below, shows a suggested order of issue for each of these types. With so few specimens available for study it is extremely difficult to be too definitive, however, some attempt needs to be made and the reason for the above order are listed below.

Manville 091 is placed first as it has the earliest host coin date. The value too is written in an archaic manner with the shillings abbreviated to, Sh rather than the use of a stroke as in type 090. Finally theb business name is given as RCM which must be assumed to be an earlier name as it is not used again in the series. Interestingly this type has the star mark very similar to the one used on the 2/6 rectangular type. This does seem an anomaly but does not alter the allocation of the issue.

Manville 090 is placed second as it is the highest value of 5/- written in a more modern way. Both the 5 shilling types are placed early because these coins were not cut, which is assumed to, be a more systematic basis for the issue.

Now we come to the cut issues. As has been discussed above thev 2/4 rectangular type without star would likely have been issued before thev 2/6 over 2/4 type with the additional star mark. So these are placed 3 and 4 in Table 1.

Table 1. List of Rothsay Countermark Types in Suggested Order of Issue.

Table 1: LIST OF ROTHSAY COUNTERMARK TYPES IN SUGGESTED ORDER OF ISSUE									
No.	Manville No.	Fig.	Value.	Earliest host	Latest host	Desc.*	No. known	Star mark	Notes
1	091	4	5 Sh rectangle.	1777	1789	RCM	2	Yes	1 stolen
2	090	3	5 / • round	1799	1799	RM	1	No	Stolen
3	095	2	2 / 4 rectangle	1777	1777	RM	1	No	New find
4	094	7	2 / 6 rectangle	1746	1791	RM	12	Yes	
5	093	6	2 / 6 round	1773	1794	RM	10	No	
6	096	8	1 / 8 round	1777	1792	RM	31	No	
7	092	5	4 / 6 round	1778	1821	RCW	46	No	

*Description: RCM=Rothsay Cotton Mills. RM=Rothsay Mills. RCW=Rothsay Cotton Works.

cutting of the die, as opposed to the very basic cutting for the 2/4 and 2/6 rectangular types.

It is important to highlight here the problem that arises with the cut issues where often it is not possible to allocate a host coin date. The 1/8 issue is placed next with a very similar countermark structure to the 2/6 round, though being an exact fraction of 5 shillings it is assumed that the 2/6 round and 1/8 round were issued synonymously.

Table 2: THE HIGHEST PRICE OF 8 REALES, IN PENCE, DURING EACH YEAR 1790 TO 1821, COMPARED WITH THE COUNTERMARKED ISSUE VALUES OF 5/, 4/8 AND 4/6d.

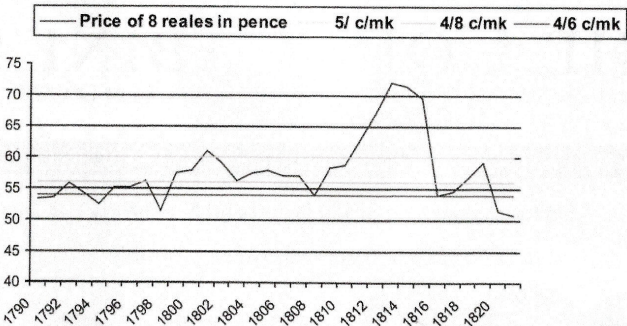


Table 2. The Highest Price of 8 Reales in Pence, During Each Year 1790 to 1821, Compared with the Countermarked Issue Values of 5/, 4/8, and 4/6d.

Finally we have the 4/6 issue which we are fairly certain was issued in 1820 as that date is part of the countermark and that the latest host coin date is 1821.

The next problem is to align these issues with the prevailing price of silver to try to give approximate periods for the issues (Table 2). This Table incorporates a value for an 8 reales of 4/8 to cater for the cut half 8 reales issue at 2/4.

It can be seen from Table 2 that the issues of 5 shillings listed as 1 and 2 in Table 1 could have been issued during the period 1790 until 1802, where the price of a silver 8 reales went above the 60d mark for a short while, or even until 1811 where there was a more pronounced increase in silver value. However, to fit the cut half 8

reales atb 2/4 into this graph then the issue period could be more likely to have been from 1790 until 1799 or 1800. The 4/56 type value, believed to have been issued in 1820 is certainly confirmed in Table 2 where the silver price for an 8m reales falls below 4/6 in 1820.

So to summarise the possible dates of issue for the various countermark value types, bearing in mind the above discussion and the details in Table 1, they could be:

Numbers 1 to 6 from 1790 to 1800.

Number 7 from 1820 to 1821.

What, therefore, happened during the period 1800 to 1820?

As mentioned above the cotton-spinning mills at Rothsay were founded in 1779 and we know were still in operation in 1821, the last dated countermarked host coin. During this period the mills changed hands many times. They were initially set up by James Kenyon who sold them in 1785 to David Dale who was the original founder of Lanark Mills, another countermarked dollars issuer. Dale relinquished the mills in about 1790 so it is certainly possible that he, or through his input, initiated the first issues. Again the mills changed hands a few times until being purchased by William Kelly and Robert Thom about 1815. Kelly had been a manager at Lanark Mills and therefore knew all about countermarked dollars and due to the fact that he spent a lot of money increasing the efficiency of the operation is likely to have ensured secure payments to his workers. It is therefore quite possible that there were two separate issues of countermarked silver coins by two different owners. This may also explain the cutting of the dollars in the early issues where experimentation was more likely. The later issue of 4/6 seems to conform more to the other standard issues in Scotland around this date of 1815 to 1820 and beyond.

The website for Bute Museum (butemuseum.org.uk) is quite fascinating, showing the wealth of artefacts on display from the Mesolithic and Neolithic through to the closing years of the 20th century. I look forward on my next visit to, Scotland to seeing this new coin found and being educated too.

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Shifting Perspectives Bedevil a Countermarked Gold Joe of Curaçao

David Wolfer. NI#2793

An exceptionally rare countermarked gold coin of Curaçao crossed the auction block in a Heritage Auctions *Platinum Night Auction* held at the company's Dallas, Texas headquarters on August 5, 2020 (lot #30104). Displaying five regulated countermarks on the obverse of a Brazilian 6400 Reis host coin dated 1781 and one on its reverse face, the coin happens to be one of only two surviving specimens with this specific countermarking arrangement known today.



*Fig. 1 Curacao:
Counterstamped 6 Pesos ND
(c. 1815). Obverse*



*Fig. 2 Curacao:
Counterstamped 6 Pesos ND
(c. 1815) Reverse.*

In a descriptive account that reiterates much of the same information presented when the piece was last offered for sale (Stacks *Louis E. Eliasberg, Sr. Collection Sale*- April 15-19, 2005; lot #3001), the Heritage catalog traces an impeccable provenance as far back as the Jules Fonrobert Collection; diligently catalogued and dispersed by the

collection's original caretaker Adolph Weyl in 1878. The other known specimen was last seen in public as lot #1220 in *The Garrett Collection-Part I Sale*, conducted by Numismatics Fine Arts/Bank Leu AG in Beverly Hills, California; May 16-18, 1984 (ex-Meili Collection).

Information applicable to the emission has been grudgingly revealed through the persistence of a few dedicated researchers of Curaçao's cut and countermarked series. After nearly a century of speculative guesswork, key archival attestation was subsequently published by Pieter Swakhoven (see "*Joe Caused a Lot of Trouble on Curaçao*" Numismatic Circular Vol. 99, No. 6, Dec. 2001, pgs. 366-369). Working from administrative records he located on Curaçao, Swakhoven summarizes actions of council that unequivocally prove five obverse countermarks were produced under Johan Rudolph Lauffer's governorship in 1798.

‘... on May 14, 1798 the governor and his council decided that every owner of Joes again had to report to the governor's office with his coins. Under the supervision of two members of council, a team of five goldsmiths would examine the coins... As proof of assay the coin would receive four different stamps, placed in the four corners... On May 15, 1798, the governor informed the public of these measures, but at the same time made a small change in the ordinance. Of the four [stamps] previously mentioned, one had to be placed twice. In 1809, the English commander J. Cockburn referred to these stamps as three single and one double stamp.’

Swakhoven's research confirms postulations previously advanced by Scholten (pg. 163), Pridmore (pg. 250), and Gordon (pg. 70); thus, concluding a long journey of supposition that began with Duffield's tentative listing under Brazil in 1921 (see *The Numismatist* - April, 1921).

A Chronology Differentiated by Punchmarks

In all likelihood, one of the five obverse stamps [**G+I** monogram] belongs to Gothelp Israel Hoyer (1731-1809), a local goldsmith believed to have previously assayed and stamped gold Joes for Governor Johannes de Veer back as 1792. Referencing an earlier ordinance dated September 12, 1792, Swakhoven writes, "... Godhelf [sp.] Israel Hoyer... had to place a mark on all Joes that were delivered to the governor's office. As there is no mention of the kind of stamp, it is possible that Hoyer used a monogram consisting of the letters GIH, whereby he combined the I with the first leg of the H and put a dot above that first leg. This monogram comes in a rectangular incuse." (See Figs. 3 & 4)



*Fig. 3- GIH
monogram of
1792,
Stacks/Bower
Jan. 2014, lot
#511*



*Fig. 4- GIH
monogram of
1792, closeup
of lot #511*

Inexplicably, Swakhoven failed to connect the later **G+I** monogram punch of 1798 (see Figs. 5 & 6) to Gothelp Hoyer and his earlier stamping of 1792; instead, reiterating the musings of previous writers

that this particular countermark was the work of Gabriel Jacomie; another goldsmith also purportedly appointed to test and guaranty Curaçao's circulating gold.



*Fig. 5- G+H
monogram of 1798,
closeup; Heritage
#30104 specimen*



*Fig. 6- G+H
monogram of 1798,
closeup;
DNW/Roehrs #324*

It is my belief that in consideration of the evidentiary countermarking performed by Hoyer in 1792 and because the monogrammed lettering reflects Hoyer's initials rather than those of Gabriel Jacomie, he is the likely originator of the **G+I** punchmark of 1798. Regrettably, no source material is available to unequivocally confirm this opinion.

Two other monogrammed stamps- **MH** and **MGH** - also punched into the gold Joe under discussion are credibly assigned to Hoyer's son- Michael Godfried Hoyer [1771-1845] (see Figs. 7 & 8).



Fig. 7- MH monogram of 1798
(Heritage #30104 closeup)



Fig. 8- MGH monogram of
1798 (Heritage #30104
closeup)

Accounts brought to light by Robert Lyall (*West Indian Coinage- Some New Discoveries*, Spink, 1998) not only confirm this goldsmith's position as Curaçao's chief assayer in 1807 but also verify his prior employment as such- "... he is hereby continued in his capacity of Government assayer for all kind of Coin and specie in this place ..." (Lyall, pg. 18). Apparently, Michael Hoyer held this appointment at least through the end of 1815 - "... he the said Michael Godfried Hoyer is authorized to demand and receive one stiver for every four pieces of gold coin of whatever kind or value which may be taken to him for the purpose of being essayed..." (Swakhoven, pg. 369). Documentary verification of the son's presence during the period under discussion coupled with the presence of his monogrammed initials engraved into

two out of the five punches used in compliance with Governor Lauffer's order establishes a justifiable connection with Michael Hoyer's involvement in the official stamping of gold Joes in 1798 (see Lyall conjecture, pg. 18).

The final two stamps on the obverse – “**L** in circle” and “**B** in serrated border”, respectively- have yet to be positively identified.



Fig. 9- DNW/Roehrs #324, reverse punch positioned @ 8:45, left edge. Image courtesy of Dix Noonan Webb Auctions

A singular reverse stamp (somewhat degraded on this specimen and found in even poorer condition on the Roehrs specimen, *DNW Auction*, lot #584), which Swakhoven identifies as a “W in circular indent”, appears to have been ordered by the English lieutenant-governor John le Couteur in 1815 (ordinances of Nov. 21 and Dec. 7). “... *shall be stamped with a certain mark or stamped purposely devised and fixed upon...*” (see DNW/Roehrs specimen #324, Fig. 9). In a speculative

appraisal of this notably ambiguous order, Swakhoven effectively segregates dating of the reverse punchmark from previous countermarking efforts- “In the same ordinance, however, the governor, as Cockburn did in 1809, also referred to the former stamped Joes [the Lauffer countermarked Joes of 1798] as having the five old stamps.” With five countermarks inhabiting the obverse face of Joes already circulating in Curaçao, attributing the reverse punchmark to the 1815 action would seem a valid determination.

Interestingly, gold joes are known to carry the “**W** in circular indent” punchmark on their reverse, yet without any evidence of Michael Hoyer’s second centrally placed **MGH** monogrammed countermark; in other words, displaying only four punchmarks instead of five on their obverse face (see Gordon #14a [Roehrs #524] & Roehrs treble-island specimen #584). The existence of these anomalous specimens led Swakhoven to briefly question which of two countermarks- the centrally placed **MGH** countermark or the “**W** in circular indent” - accurately represented the Curaçao directive of 1815. In the end, however, empirical evidence allowed him to conclude, ‘In my view, this stamp [“**W** in circular indent”] is the one placed on all goods and dubious Joes in accordance with the ordinances of November 21, 1815 and December 7, 1815... My opinion is based on the appearance of the *W* in a plain circle. The same plain circle that is found on the cut three and five real pieces of the Spanish dollar in 1818’ (see Figs. 10-12, below).



*Fig. 10- DNW/Roehrs
#324*



*Fig. 11- DNW/Roehrs
#332*



*Fig. 12- DNW/Roehrs
#331*

With the punch mark's circular ring showing stylistic similarities to countermarks found on Curaçao's silver segmental coins of 1818, Swakhoven's determination is easily embraced; yet again, we find a lack of source material capable of verifying his claim. Regardless, this keen observation is still the best evidence to date that a lone reverse - face countermark represents the physical manifestation of an effort on the part of Curaçao's chief assayer at the time, Michael Hoyer, to comply with the 1815 directive.

Because the singular reverse countermark can be found on gold Joes displaying both four and five obverse-face stamps, attribution of the obverse stamps to the earlier decision by Governor Lauffer and his council to regulate gold Joes in 1798 again seem utterly defensible. As to why there were two issuances showing a dissimilar number of obverse punch marks is anyone's guess today, but a simplistic sequencing of the evidence would date gold Joes with four stamps to May 14, 1798 and five-stamped specimens to the following day. Undoubtedly, this noticeably constricted timeline will produce some lively discussions on the subject as further research progresses.

Although Scholten was the first to suggest the reverse mark “W” stands for Curaçao's capitol Willemstad, the letter is just as readily viewed as an “M” in circular indent” (Figs. 9 & 10). By approaching the punchmark from this perspective, an unmistakable connection to Curaçao's then-appointed chief assayer - Michael Godfried Hoyer - instantly materializes. It is highly probable that officials would have wanted a mark of verification readily associated with the goldsmith directly responsible for its placement - in effect, matching countermarking protocols previously adhered to in 1798. If read as an “M”, a more reasonable explanation for the mark's presence is realized.

Addressing a Minor Misdirection

Given the archival documentation at our disposal today, the historical chronology of these gold countermarked Joes of Curaçao is no longer an open question. Unfortunately, a comment included in the Heritage descriptive write-up risks skewing a hard-earned narrative: “According to Pridmore, who mistakenly placed the issue under c.1799 and the order of Governor J. K. Lauffer, these Brazilian gold pieces were counterstamped in order to distinguish them from clipped, debased, and light-weight plugged 6400 Reis, a program which likely took place c. 1814 under Governor John Hodgson.” Thankfully, well-intentioned conjecture of this sort is easily dismissed with the archival material produced by Swakhoven in 2001. And in the end, as one might expect with the fleeting appearance of such a rare numismatic artifact, Heritage's factual discrepancy had little effect on buyer interest. Lot

#30104 was finally hammered down for the impressive sum of \$144,000 (includes buyer's premium).

Conclusion

When the decision was made to punchmark island gold at the turn of the 19th century, political, economic and social upheavals were ravaging Curaçao's commercial sector by disrupting longstanding patterns of trade. The recurring turmoil continued to undermine any sense of well-being within a population made up mainly of merchants and traders. Consequently, presiding governors were called upon over time to quell the protests and disorder that followed. The countermarking of authentic and debased gold Joes was one of several responses by authorities to reestablish a degree of confidence in local currencies during this tumultuous period.

As numismatists, we are fortunate that a few actual specimens and some obscure referential material has survived to tantalize us with hints of the inordinate currency adaptations authorities chose to address a pervasive systematic debauchment of their gold specie. Investigative work by Scholten, Lyall, and Swakhoven have progressively broadened a palette of clues crucial to the unravelling of a complicated puzzle. By combining these research efforts with high-quality images of the few specimens still extant, a better reconstruction of the coinage and its historiography becomes feasible today.

In the process of resolving a menagerie of datapoints, a family of goldsmiths emerge as key players in what has up to this point been a poorly understood numismatic drama. In addition, the letter **W** is unceremoniously flipped upside down to provide a more logical explanation for a particular punchmark's presence and purpose. Will this reappraisal of existing data lead to a better understanding of Curaçao's enigmatic gold emissions and the cut and countermarked coins that followed? As always, only time will tell. Much is still left to be concluded on the series. If further inquiries can successfully unveil the secrets that currently torment our intellectual hold on the subject, not only will a historically reluctant narrative benefit from the effort but also our collective numismatic curiosity, as well.

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Kingdom of Great Britain – Middlesex Half Penny (~1795)

James Martin

During the era of revolution (America & France) Great Britain also became a bit restive. She was also in the midst of the Industrial Revolution, a source of additional social disruption that saw populations gathering around industrial areas creating a new way of factory centered life. Great Britain escaped revolution, but did see some land reforms, that eased the tensions somewhat. The private minting of pennies, half pennies and farthings filled the need for small change that the British mint was not fulfilling. With the new factory employment, often in cotton mills, the workers received their daily or weekly pay in little envelopes containing these copper coins.

These factors led to a widening of the crack between the haves and the have-nots. Royalists being the majority and dominant 'haves', including a growing middle class, and a disaffected few advocating for more substantive reforms. Both groups saw their opinions expressed in the designs found on some 'political & social' half-penny, and farthing, tokens of the day. An even smaller group of tokens exhibited these opinions in reference to the tragic events of the French Revolution. All of these tokens were, and are, eagerly sought out by collectors.



Our 'Coin Spotlight' piece here is a little ambiguous at first sight. It

features the jugate portraits of King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette of France with the surrounding legend expressing that fact, in French. The reverse shows the horrible invention of Dr. Guillotine, with head catching basket, before the skewed image of a building with the denomination of 'HALFPENNY' above. As presented it could leave the viewer wondering about the exact message. With the aid of a sister token one can discern the Royalist nature of this token. While this other token bears the same royal portraits on the obverse the reverse texts states: 'MURD. BY / THE FACTIOUS. / LOUIS XVI. JAN. 21 / M. ANTOINETTE / OCT. 16. / 1793. Reference Dalton & Hamer – Middlesex # 993a.

This token (D&H– Middlesex # 513, rarity RR, w/ diagonal milled edge) is one of many struck by John Skidmore & Son (Paul). A main source of income for the Skidmores was their iron foundry. He was responsible for several inventions that helped people heat their homes from a fireplace. His stovegrates and registers were so good he even held the appointment of stovegrate maker for His Majesties Board of Ordnance. After becoming Skidmore & Son they produced numerous tokens, ultimately responsible for more than a quarter of all the token varieties produced in the late 18th century, including most of those issued by Matthew Denton, Thomas Prattent, and Thomas Spence. The seeming sentiments of this Loyalist piece indicate it is not product for the revolutionary Thomas Spence however.